

## RENTAL MARKET REPORT

## Nova Scotia Highlights

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Date Released: Spring 2009

Apartment Vacancies  
Rise in Nova Scotia

- The overall vacancy rate in Nova Scotia increased from 3.4 to 3.8 per cent.
- Vacancy rates increased in all bedroom types with the exception of bachelor units.
- Cape Breton recorded the lowest vacancy rate in the province at 2.4 per cent and posted the largest vacancy rate decline.
- The average vacancy rate for a two-bedroom apartment in Nova Scotia was 4.0 per cent while the average rent for a two bedroom apartment was \$808.

- The overall average rent in Nova Scotia rose 3.6 per cent in April (based on units common to both the 2008 and 2009 surveys).

## Overview

The overall vacancy rate in urban centres across Nova Scotia increased in the spring 2009 rental market survey, rising to 3.8 per cent from 3.4 per cent in April 2008. The overall average rent across the province (for urban centres surveyed) increased by 3.6 per cent for those structures that were common to both the 2008 and 2009 spring surveys.

The rental market across Nova Scotia varies in each of the province's urban centres as the vacancy rates reported in this year's Spring survey ranged from a low of 2.4 per cent in Cape Breton to 5.0 per cent in Truro. Despite variances in local markets, demand for rental units in Nova Scotia remains steady, supported by stable employment levels and a recent trend of positive net-migration dating back to the second quarter of 2007.

Figure 1

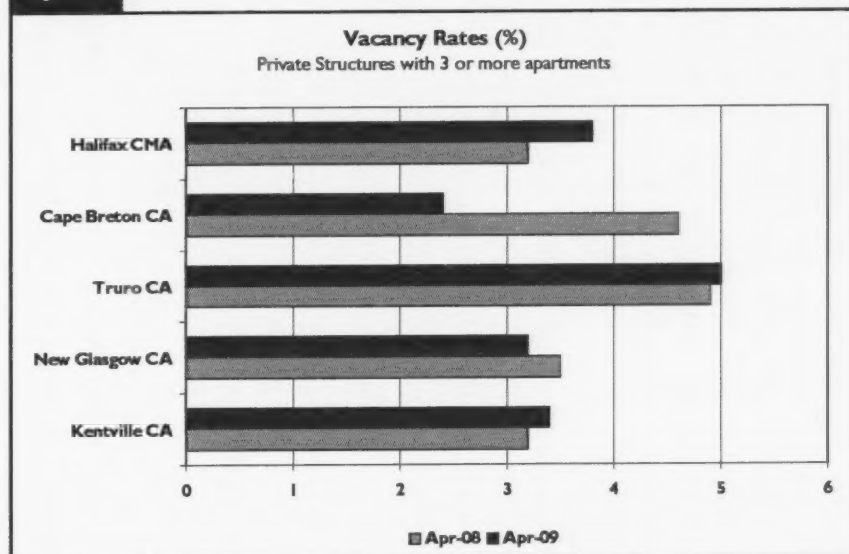
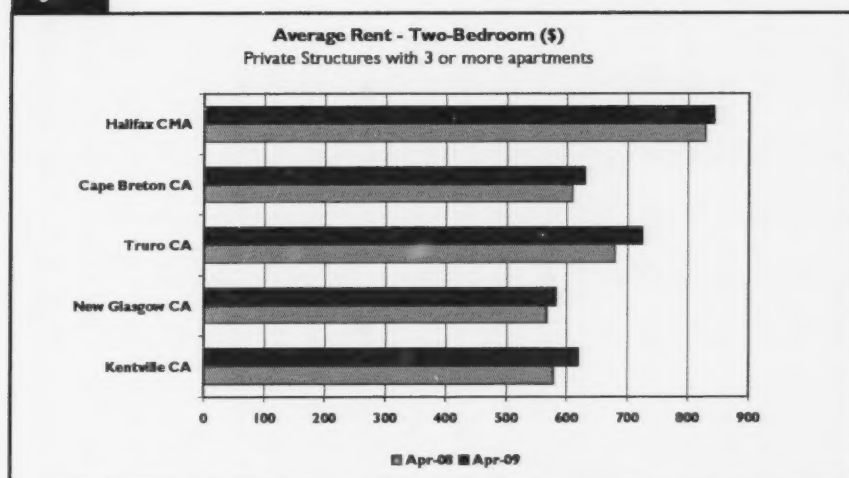


Figure 2



As was the case in the 2008 fall rental market survey, a significant vacancy rate increase in parts of Halifax has affected the overall vacancy rate reported for the province. In the Halifax rental market, which makes up 84 per cent of the provincial rental stock, the overall vacancy rate increased to 3.8 per cent from 3.2 per cent in the spring 2008 report. Not surprisingly, the overall vacancy rate for the province was also 3.8 per cent as most of the other urban centres in the province had little change in their reported vacancy compared to last year, with the exception of Cape Breton. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Halifax was \$843. This was an increase of 2.8 per cent for those structures that were common to both the 2008 and 2009 spring rental market survey.

In Cape Breton the vacancy rate declined by 2.2 percentage points in this year's April survey, dropping from 4.6 per cent last year to 2.4 per cent this year. The rental market remains quite attractive in the Cape

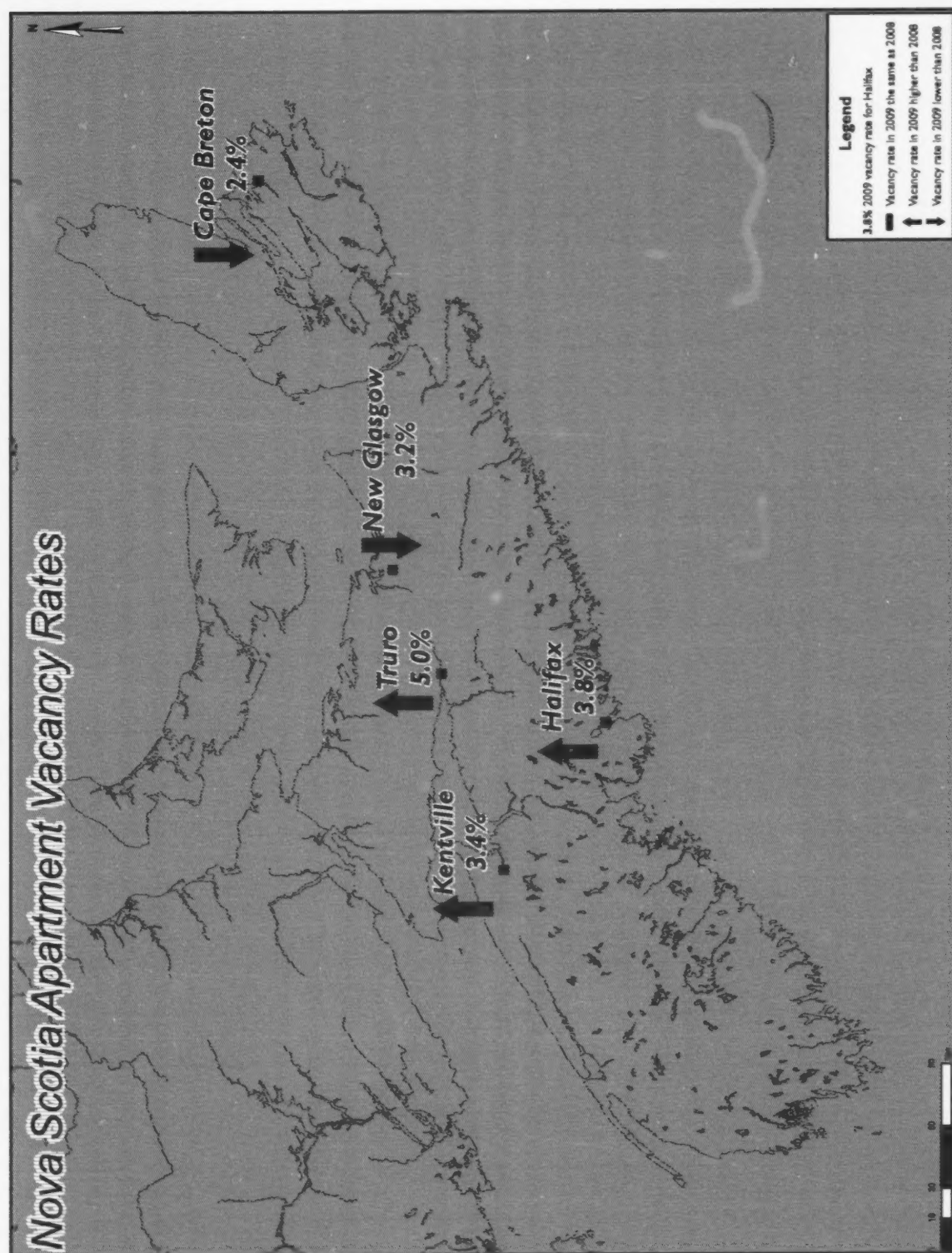
Breton area as the existing homes market has been experiencing double digit average price growth over the past few years while the increase in average rent has closely mirrored the rate of increase in inflation. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Cape Breton was \$629 compared to \$609 last year.

In Truro, the second largest rental market outside of Halifax, the vacancy rate inched up to 5.0 per cent from 4.9 per cent last year. The vacancy rate in Truro has been steadily rising over the past couple of years due to an active existing homes market and the addition of newer units being added to the local rental stock. The average rent in Truro continues to rise and recorded an average two bedroom rent of \$724. Truro is the only market outside of Halifax to have an average two bedroom rent in excess of \$700 per month.

Absorption of new units that were added to the local rental stock in

Kentville contributed to a sharp decline in vacancy in last year's spring survey. However, the vacancy rate appears to have leveled off with only a slight increase this year from 3.2 to 3.4 per cent. The average two bedroom rent in Kentville was \$619 this year compared to \$578 in last April's survey.

In addition to Cape Breton, New Glasgow was the only other market in the province to post a decline in vacancy rate. The vacancy rate declined from 3.5 per cent in last year's April survey to 3.2 per cent this year. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in New Glasgow was \$582 compared to \$567 last April.



### 1.1.1 Private Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) by Bedroom Type Nova Scotia

Centre	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09
Halifax CMA	2.3 b	1.8 b	2.7 a	3.5 b	3.7 b	4.2 b	3.4 c	4.0 d	3.2 a	3.8 a
Cape Breton CA	**	**	**	5.9 c	4.0 c	1.2 a	**	**	4.6 c	2.4 b
Sydney City	**	**	**	5.4 d	4.1 c	1.4 a	**	0.8 d	4.7 c	2.3 b
Remainder	**	**	**	**	**	0.4 b	0.0 d	**	4.2 d	2.8 c
Kentville CA	**	**	3.3 c	2.2 b	3.2 c	3.3 d	0.0 d	0.0 d	3.2 c	3.4 c
Kings, Subd. A SC	n/u	n/u	0.0 a	**	0.0 a	5.8 b	n/u	n/u	0.0 a	6.2 c
New Glasgow CA	10.6 c	9.4 c	3.5 b	3.4 b	2.6 a	2.3 b	3.4 d	**	3.5 a	3.2 b
Truro CA	**	**	6.1 b	4.5 b	3.9 a	5.2 a	**	**	4.9 a	5.0 a
<b>Nova Scotia 10,000+</b>	<b>2.9 b</b>	<b>2.5 b</b>	<b>3.0 b</b>	<b>3.6 b</b>	<b>3.6 a</b>	<b>4.0 b</b>	<b>3.5 c</b>	<b>3.8 d</b>	<b>3.4 a</b>	<b>3.8 a</b>

The following letter codes are used to indicate the reliability of the estimates:

a – Excellent, b – Very good, c – Good, d – Fair (Use with Caution)

\*\* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

n/u: No units exist in universe for this category n/s: No units exist in the sample for this category n/a: Not applicable

Please click [Methodology](#) or [Data Reliability Tables Appendix](#) links for more details

### 1.1.2 Private Apartment Average Rents (\$) by Bedroom Type Nova Scotia

Centre	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09
Halifax CMA	601 a	621 a	663 a	701 a	827 a	843 a	1,077 a	1,055 a	768 a	789 a
Cape Breton CA	441 a	447 b	481 a	508 a	609 a	629 a	752 c	740 b	567 a	597 a
Sydney City	443 a	452 b	489 a	522 a	619 a	651 a	793 c	762 a	576 a	617 a
Remainder	**	**	459 b	483 a	578 a	569 a	557 b	569 b	539 a	538 a
Kentville CA	422 b	490 a	505 b	513 a	578 a	619 a	651 b	670 b	549 a	573 a
Kings, Subd. A SC	n/u	n/u	508 a	501 a	508 a	546 a	n/u	n/u	508 a	539 a
New Glasgow CA	377 b	427 a	468 a	487 a	567 a	582 a	571 b	637 b	522 a	544 a
Truro CA	435 a	446 b	529 a	542 a	679 a	724 a	719 a	766 a	633 a	665 a
<b>Nova Scotia 10,000+</b>	<b>578 a</b>	<b>595 a</b>	<b>645 a</b>	<b>680 a</b>	<b>789 a</b>	<b>808 a</b>	<b>1,047 a</b>	<b>1,021 a</b>	<b>740 a</b>	<b>761 a</b>

The following letter codes are used to indicate the reliability of the estimates (cv = coefficient of variation):

a – Excellent ( $0 \leq cv \leq 2.5$ ), b – Very good ( $2.5 < cv \leq 5$ ), c – Good ( $5 < cv \leq 7.5$ )

d – Fair (Use with Caution) ( $7.5 < cv \leq 10$ )

\*\* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

n/u: No units exist in universe for this category n/s: No units exist in the sample for this category n/a: Not applicable

Please click [Methodology](#) or [Data Reliability Tables Appendix](#) links for more details



### 1.1.3 Number of Private Apartment Units Vacant and Universe in April 2009 by Bedroom Type Nova Scotia

Centre	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total
Halifax CMA	42 b	2,383	524 b	14,921	805 b	19,368	113 d	2,801	1,485 a	39,473
Cape Breton CA	**	147	30 c	505	14 a	1,147	**	138	47 b	1,937
Sydney City	**	124	18 d	337	12 a	855	1 d	124	33 b	1,440
Remainder	**	**	**	168	1 b	292	**	14	14 c	497
Kentville CA	**	113	9 b	437	23 d	690	0 d	32	44 c	1,271
Kings, Subd. A SC	n/u	n/u	**	12	4 b	71	n/u	n/u	5 c	83
New Glasgow CA	9 c	93	12 b	346	16 b	709	**	37	38 b	1,185
Truro CA	**	98	31 b	686	85 a	1,638	**	87	126 a	2,509
<b>Nova Scotia 10,000+</b>	<b>72 b</b>	<b>2,839</b>	<b>613 b</b>	<b>17,027</b>	<b>956 b</b>	<b>23,852</b>	<b>119 d</b>	<b>3,120</b>	<b>1,760 a</b>	<b>46,838</b>

The following letter codes are used to indicate the reliability of the estimates:

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### 1.1.4 Private Apartment Availability Rates (%) by Bedroom Type Nova Scotia

Centre	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09	Apr-08	Apr-09
Halifax CMA	3.0 b	3.2 c	3.6 b	5.0 a	4.4 b	5.3 b	4.7 c	6.5 c	4.0 a	5.1 a
Cape Breton CA	**	**	**	5.9 c	4.2 c	1.4 a	**	**	4.7 c	2.6 b
Sydney City	**	**	**	5.4 d	4.1 c	1.8 b	**	0.8 d	4.7 c	2.5 b
Remainder	**	**	**	**	**	0.4 b	0.0 d	**	4.6 d	2.8 c
Kentville CA	**	**	4.3 c	2.2 b	4.8 c	3.9 d	0.0 d	0.0 d	4.6 b	3.8 c
Kings, Subd. A SC	n/u	n/u	0.0 a	**	0.0 a	5.8 b	n/u	n/u	0.0 a	6.2 c
New Glasgow CA	11.8 c	9.4 c	3.9 b	4.3 b	3.4 a	3.0 a	3.4 d	**	4.2 a	3.9 b
Truro CA	**	**	6.3 b	4.9 b	3.9 a	5.3 a	**	**	5.0 a	5.2 a
<b>Nova Scotia 10,000+</b>	<b>3.6 b</b>	<b>3.8 c</b>	<b>3.9 b</b>	<b>4.9 a</b>	<b>4.3 a</b>	<b>5.0 a</b>	<b>4.6 c</b>	<b>6.0 c</b>	<b>4.1 a</b>	<b>4.9 a</b>

The following letter codes are used to indicate the reliability of the estimates:

a – Excellent, b – Very good, c – Good, d – Fair (Use with Caution)

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n/u: No units exist in universe for this category n/s: No units exist in the sample for this category n/a: Not applicable

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### 1.1.5 Private Apartment Estimate of Percentage Change (%) of Average Rent<sup>1</sup> by Bedroom Type Nova Scotia

Centre	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Apr-07 to Apr-08	Apr-08 to Apr-09	Apr-07 to Apr-08	Apr-08 to Apr-09	Apr-07 to Apr-08	Apr-08 to Apr-09	Apr-07 to Apr-08	Apr-08 to Apr-09	Apr-07 to Apr-08	Apr-08 to Apr-09
Halifax CMA	2.6 c	3.4 c	2.8 b	3.4 b	2.1 b	2.8 b	4.6 d	1.9 c	2.1 b	3.5 b
Cape Breton CA	**	**	**	**	4.5 d	**	**	3.5 c	4.7 d	**
Sydney City	**	**	**	**	3.1 d	**	**	**	2.9 c	**
Remainder	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Kentville CA	**	6.9 b	**	++	2.3 c	3.1 d	**	**	2.9 c	++
Kings, Subd. A SC	n/u	n/u	n/u	**	n/u	**	n/u	n/u	n/u	**
New Glasgow CA	**	**	++	++	++	++	**	**	++	3.9 d
Truro CA	4.2 d	5.7 d	2.0 c	**	2.1 a	1.5 a	++	++	2.3 a	2.1 c
<b>Nova Scotia 10,000+</b>	<b>2.4 c</b>	<b>3.6 c</b>	<b>2.8 b</b>	<b>3.4 b</b>	<b>2.1 b</b>	<b>2.9 b</b>	<b>4.6 d</b>	<b>1.9 c</b>	<b>2.2 b</b>	<b>3.6 b</b>

<sup>1</sup>The Percentage Change of Average Rent is a measure of the market movement, and is based on those structures that were common to the survey sample for both years.

The following letter codes are used to indicate the reliability of the estimates:

a – Excellent, b – Very good, c – Good, d – Fair (Use with Caution)

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++ change in rent is not statistically significant. This means that the change in rent is not statistically different than zero (0)

n/u: No units exist in universe for this category n/s: No units exist in the sample for this category n/a: Not applicable

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## TECHNICAL NOTE:

*Difference between Percentage Change of Average Rents (Existing and New Structures) AND Percentage Change of Average Rents from Fixed Sample (Existing Structures Only):*

**Percentage Change of Average Rents (New and Existing Structures):** The increase/decrease obtained from the calculation of percentage change of average rents between two years (example: \$500 in 2008 vs. \$550 in 2009 represents an increase of 10 percent) is impacted by changes in the composition of the rental universe (e.g. the inclusion of newly built luxury rental buildings in the survey, rental units renovated/upgraded or changing tenants could put upward pressure on average rents in comparison to the previous year) as well as by the rent level movement (e.g. increase/decrease in the level of rents that landlords charge their tenants).

**Percentage Change of Average Rents from Fixed Sample (Existing Structures Only):** This is a measure that estimates the rent level movement. The estimate is based on structures that were common to the survey sample for both the 2008 and 2009 Spring Rental Market Surveys. However, some composition effects still remain e.g. rental units renovated/upgraded or changing tenants because the survey does not collect data to such level of details.

## METHODOLOGY FOR RENTAL MARKET SURVEY

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) conducts the **Rental Market Survey (RMS)** every year in April and October to estimate the relative strengths in the rental market. The survey is conducted on a sample basis in all urban areas with populations of 10,000 and more. The survey targets only privately initiated structures with at least three rental units, which have been on the market for at least three months. The data collected for a structure depends on whether it is an apartment or a row structure. The survey collects market rent, available and vacant unit data for all sampled structures. Most RMS data contained in this publication refer to privately initiated apartment structures.

The survey is conducted by a combination of telephone interviews and site visits, and information is obtained from the owner, manager, or building superintendent. The survey is conducted during the first two weeks of April/October, and the results reflect market conditions at that time.

CMHC's Rental Market Survey provides a snapshot of vacancy and availability rates, and average rents in both new and existing structures. There also exists a measure for the change in rent that is calculated based on existing structures only. The estimate is based on structures that were common to the survey sample for both the April 2008 and April 2009 Rental Market Surveys. The change in rent in existing structures is an estimate of the change in rent that the landlords charge and removes compositional effects on the rent level movement due to new buildings, conversions, and survey sample rotation. The estimate of per cent change in rent is available in all Canada and Provincial Highlights publications, and also in the CMA reports (fall survey only). The rent levels in new and existing structures are also published. While the per cent change in rents in existing structures published in the reports are statistically significant, changes in rents that one might calculate based on rent levels in new and existing structures may or may not be statistically significant.

## DEFINITIONS

**Availability:** A rental unit is considered available if the existing tenant has given, or has received, notice to move, and a new tenant has not signed a lease; or the unit is vacant (see definition of vacancy below).

**Rent:** The rent refers to the actual amount tenants pay for their unit. No adjustments are made for the inclusion or exclusion of amenities and services such as heat, hydro, parking, and hot water. For available and vacant units, the rent is the amount the owner is asking for the unit.

It should be noted that the average rents reported in this publication provide a sound indication of the amounts paid by unit size and geographical sector. Utilities such as heating, electricity and hot water may or may not be included in the rent.

**Rental Apartment Structure:** Any building containing three or more rental units, of which at least one unit is not ground oriented. Owner-occupied units are not included in the rental building unit count.

**Rental Row (Townhouse) Structure:** Any building containing three or more rental units, all of which are ground oriented with vertical divisions. Owner-occupied units are not included in the rental building unit count. These row units in some centres are commonly referred to as townhouses.

**Vacancy:** A unit is considered vacant if, at the time of the survey, it is physically unoccupied and available for immediate rental.

**Definitions of Census Areas referred to in this publication are as follows:**

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). The census population count of the urban core is at least 10,000 to form a census agglomeration and at least 100,000 to form a census metropolitan area. To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data. CMAs and CAs contain whole municipalities or Census Subdivisions.

All data presented in this publication is based on Statistics Canada's 2006 Census area definitions.

### Acknowledgement

The Rental Market Survey could not have been conducted without the cooperation of the rental property owners, managers, and building superintendents throughout Canada. CMHC acknowledges their hard work and assistance in providing timely and accurate information. As a result of their contribution, CMHC is able to provide information that benefits the entire housing industry.



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